

Testimony – Judicial Committee – House of Representatives – Research
inclusive of Em. Stem Cell

Good morning.

I am Kathleen Russell, I am one of the 40,000 people here in Michigan who are living with Parkinson's Disease. I was 39 when I was correctly diagnosed, I am 49 now.

By way of introduction, I would like to digress for just a moment, for on my way in I noticed that there are two other committee meetings today:

1. Great Lakes and Environment and
2. Transportation

While I grew-up in rural Pennsylvania, my grandparents purchased a cottage on Crystal Lake back in the '40's and one of the joys of my early life quickly became the family reunions held every 4th of July up in Beulah, Michigan.

In fact, I am still trying to figure out how 29 grandchildren, 16 aunts and uncles, and one grandmother all fit into two small cottages, shared 2 bathrooms and 1 outhouse and 'kept coming back'

My love for the outdoors began at the age of five when my father took my brother and myself to our local ski area – 400 foot vertical drop and a poma lift that used to fling those of us that weighed under 75 lbs. into the air every now and then.

While it's been a while since I had to worry about being "flung into the air", I still love to ski.

My love for the Great Lake State grew (as did my knowledge that Michigan is not flat!) while pedaling my then brand new Schwinn La Tour II, with Phil Wood hubs and a Blackburn rack, from Toledo, Ohio to Traverse City.

Serving as a camp counselor at the Timbers Girl Scout Camp and leading backpacking trips to the South Manitou Island sealed my joy in simply being in the north country.

After living and working in the Pacific NW and Colorado, I returned to Michigan in 1988 to attend graduate school. The years since I have been immersed in the worlds of child welfare and higher education. "oh, the time I have spent down on Forrest in Juvenile Court"!

My foster care and adoption stories will have to wait for another time.

I ask however that you bare with me as I borrow from my teaching 'tool kit' and that you join with me as I share the following:

40,000

5

\$100,000

5

grain of sand

40,000 – number of Michiganders living with Parkinson's Disease.

(source MPF, Southfield, MI)

5 – there are five stages to Parkinson's Disease. I call them:

Stage One - "let the tremors begin"

Stage Three – "Velcro is my friend"

Stage Five – "A mind imprisoned in a body."

(source NPF, Miami, FL)

\$100,000 – the dollar amount a financial advisor has told me that I will need for end of life care.

5 – five activities I will miss the most: talking, hiking, swimming, kayaking, skiing

Grain of sand – what we are speaking about is smaller than a grain of sand.

NOTE: I will not be reading the following, I include it for those who might benefit from a more in depth overview of PD.10/30/2007

Parkinson's disease strikes people in many different ways, leaving them to experience a broad range of symptoms. Though symptoms may be mild or severe or occur frequently or infrequently, Parkinson's disease appears to take on five different stages. The time spent at each stage of the disease varies, and the skipping of stages, from Stage 1 to Stage 3, for example, is not uncommon.

Parkinson's disease stages include:

Stage 1: During this initial phase of the disease, a patient usually experiences mild symptoms. These symptoms may inconvenience the day-to-day tasks the patient would otherwise complete with ease. Typically these symptoms will include the presence of tremors or experiencing shaking in one of the limbs.

Also during Stage 1, friends and family can usually detect changes in the Parkinson's patient including poor posture, loss of balance, and abnormal facial expressions.

Stage 2: In the second stage of Parkinson's disease, the patients symptoms are bilateral, affecting both limbs and both sides of the body. The patient usually encounters problems walking or maintaining balance, and the inability to complete normal physical tasks becomes more apparent.

Stage 3: Stage 3 symptoms of Parkinson's disease can be rather severe and include the inability to walk straight or to stand. There is a noticeable slowing of physical movements in Stage 3.

Stage 4: This stage of the disease is accompanied by severe symptoms of Parkinson's. Walking may still occur, but it is often limited and rigidity and bradykinesia are often visible. During this stage, most patients are unable to complete day-to-day tasks, and usually cannot live on their own. The tremors or shakiness that take over during the earlier stages however, may lessen or become non-existent for unknown reasons during this time.

Stage 5: The last or final stage of Parkinson's disease usually takes over the patients physical movements. The patient is usually unable to take care of himself or herself and may not be able to stand or walk during this stage. A patient at Stage 5 usually requires constant one-on-one nursing care.